

HB 369 Fact Sheet
Montana Head Start and Early Head Start Programs

HB 369 provides a state appropriation of \$300 per Head Start and Early Head Start enrollee to be distributed by the Early Childhood Services Bureau of the Montana Department Public of Health and Human Services.

Background

Description of Programs – Head Start (HS) is a federally funded preschool program (generally for four-year-olds) created in 1965. It provides education, health, nutrition and parent involvement and education services to low-income children. Early Head Start (EHS) provides similar services to low-income children aged zero through three. Study after study demonstrates that participation in Head Start enhances life-long learning and ensures school readiness.

Benefits of Head Start and Early Head Start – High quality early childhood education is a sound investment – children who are enrolled in such programs are more likely to stay in school (reduces drop-out rate), more likely to be productive citizens (statistically more likely to be employed) and, as K-12 students, better able to learn and succeed in school. For every dollar a state invests in high quality early education, there is a return on investment of \$8.00 according to one study (Rolnick & Grunewald) and a 16% rate of return demonstrated in another study (Perry Preschool).

Head Start and Early Head Start in Montana – In Montana, there are 20 Head Start programs serving 4,658 children, and 8 early Head Start programs serving 638 children and 152 pregnant women. These programs employ a total of 1,429 people. (Source: National Head Start Association.) National Institute for Early Education Research, in its annual report on preschool, notes that 26% of the state's four-year-olds and 17% of the state's three-year-olds are served by Head Start and special education funds.

Issues Faced by Montana Head Start Workforce – MEA-MFT represents many of the people who work in Montana Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Lack of resources makes it hard to negotiate appropriate pay and benefits for the Head Start and Early Head Start workforce. As a result, in Montana a Head Start teacher with a BA earns less than \$21,000 a year, or \$12.21 an hour. Limited financial resources in Head Start and Early Head Start also mean poor to non-existent benefits – medical, pension, sick leave, vacation, and so on.

State Supplement of Head Start and Early Head Start funding – Twelve to 20 states supplement federal Head Start and Early Head Start funding. Thirty eight states have some form of state pre-K. Montana neither supplements Head Start nor has a state pre-K program. States supplement Head Starts and Early Head Starts for a number of purposes, including:

- Support quality improvements.
- Help providers meet HS and EHS standards.
- Extend the day/year of HS and EHS services.

HB 369 provides for a state investment in this important early childhood education program.